

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
COME-00 ACDA-12 AID-05 PC-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 MCT-01  
EB-08 /096 W  
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P R 301541Z MAR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7485  
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE  
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA  
USCINCSO  
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAN SALVDOR 1484

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, ES  
SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN INCIDENT

REF: SAN SALVADOR 1446

SUMMARY. MARCH 29 MEDIA CARRIED EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF CONTINUING PROBLEMS IN SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN AREA. GOES ADMITS SEVERAL SMALL VILLAGES IN AREA UNDER CONTROL OF CCAS, UTC AND BPR "SUBVERSIVES" WITH WOUNDED AND REFUGEES GATHERED IN SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN WHERE THEY ARE RECEIVING TREATMENT, FOOD AND PROTECTION BY SMALL CONTINGENT OF NATIONAL GUARD. EMBASSY SOURCES IN OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES, GOES, SECURITY FORCES, CATHOLIC CHURCH, NEUTRAL CAMPESINO GROUPS, COMBINED WITH VISIT BY DATT AND EMBOFFS TO SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN AFTERNOON MARCH 28, VARY WIDELY AS TO ORIGINATORS OF ACTION, EXTENT OF DEAD, WOUNDED, NUMBER OF "SUBVERSIVE" FORCES AND REFUGEES, BUT AGREE ON BASIC FACTS. INCIDENT INVOLVING PRO-AND ANTI-GOES CAMPESINOS  
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DID OCCUR DURING WEEK MARCH 19 WITH MAJOR ACTIVITY COMING MARCH 22 TO 24. UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF DEAD AND WOUNDED BOTH SIDES. ANTI-GOES FORCES HOLDING FIVE OR SIX SMALL VILLAGES AND PRO-GOES CAMPESINOS (ESTIMATES RANGE FROM 300 TO 3,000) HAVE ABANDONED HOMES IN THESE AREAS. OFFICIAL GOES SECURITY FORCES HAVE NOT BECOME OPENLY INVOLVED IN ATTEMPTING TO DISLODGE OR HUNT DOWN FECCAS-UTC-BPR ELEMENTS, BUT

APPROXIMATELY SIXTY PERSONS OF LATTER GROUP ACCUSED OF PARTICIPATING IN INCIDENT WERE "ARRESTED" BY PRO-GOES GROUPS AND TURNED OVER TO NATIONAL GUARD. GOES HEAVILY PUBLICIZING (AND APPARENTLY EXAGGERATING MAGNITUDE OF) INCIDENT AS EXAMPLE OF CATHOLIC CHURCH-INSPIRED TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN RURAL AREAS. ANTI-GOES SOURCES ALL AGREE INCIDENT SYMPTOMATIC OF GROWING UNREST OF CAMPESINOS AND THEIR DISCONTENT WITH ABSENCE OF POSITIVE GOES ACTION TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS IN RURAL AREAS. END SUMMARY.

1. MARCH 29 EDITION OF EL DIARIO DE HOY STATED THAT THERE WERE NOW 1,500 REFUGEES IN THE TOWN OF SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN (POPULATION: 35,000 FROM THE OUTLYING CANTONS BEING OCCUPIED BY BPR AND ITS COMPONENTS FECCAS AND UTC. PAPER STATED THAT TWO FEMALE REFUGEES INTERVIEWED WERE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL CONCILIATION PARTY (PCN) AND BECAUSE OF THIS HAD BECOME TARGETS FOR THE BPR. PAPER QUOTED ONE RESIDENT AS SAYING THE TROUBLE HAD STARTED BECAUSE OF "AGITATION" BY PRIESTS AMONG THE CAMPESINOS. AMONG THE CASUALTIES, STORY CITED FIFTEEN DEAD BUT ONLY TWO OF THESE DEATHS HAVE BEEN LEGALLY RECOGNIZED BY THE LOCAL CORONER, THOSE OF TRANSITO VASQUEZ (A MEMBER OF FECCAS) AND ENCARNACION VASQUEZ (A MEMBER OF ORDEN AND THE TERRITORIAL FORCES).

2. ON AFTERNOON OF MARCH 28, WITH CONCURRENCE OF MINISTRY  
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OF DEFENSE, DATT, ACCOMPANIED BY POLITICAL/LABOR OFFICER AND DAO OPERATIONS COORDINATOR, PAID A THREE-HOUR VISIT TO SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN. THE THREE TALKED TO NATIONAL GUARD DOCTOR, THE JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, THE MAYOR-ELECT, THE NATIONAL GUARD COMMANDANT, THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CUSCATLAN BRANCH OF ORDEN, AND SEVERAL OF THE REFUGEES. THE ORDEN OFFICER (RIVAS) SAID THAT THE CANTONS OF SAN FRANCISCO (18 KILOMETERS FROM SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN), ESPERANZA (8 KILOMETERS), EL RODEO (4 KILOMETERS), TECULUCA (12 KILOMETERS), EL PARAISO (8 KILOMETERS), ISTAGUA (6 KILOMETERS) WERE STILL BEING OCCUPIED BY BPR AND THAT SOME REFUGEES HAD ALSO COME IN FROM THE UNOCCUPIED CANTONS OF EL CARMEN (9 KILOMETERS) AND EL ESPINO (8 KILOMETERS).

3. RIVAS MENTIONED THAT 2,000 MEMBERS OF THE BPR HAD COME ALL THE WAY FROM EL PAISNAL, SUCHITOTO, AGUILARES AND EL RINCERO, TO ATTACK THE 400 MEMBERS OF ORDEN IN AREA. WHEN ASKED WHY THESE OUTSIDERS HAD COME, RIVAS SAID "THEY THINK THEY WERE REPORTED ON TO THE AUTHORITIES BY THE MEMBERS OF ORDEN AND THE TERRITORIAL FORCES IN THIS AREA." HE SAID THE FIGHTING HAD STARTED IN EL RODEO, WHERE HALF OF ORDEN MEMBERS

LIVE. RIVAS STATED THAT MEMBERS OF ORDEN AND TERRITORIAL FORCES WERE ARMED ONLY WITH MACHETES AND SOME PISTOLS AND WERE NO MATCH FOR THE MORE NUMEROUS AND BETTER-ARMED BPR MEMBERS. HE ALSO STATED THAT THE SEVEN PRIESTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CUSCATLAN MUST SHARE THE BLAME FOR HAVING "INCITED" THE PEOPLE. HE STATED THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 300 REFUGEES IN SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN.

4. THE NATIONAL GUARD DOCTOR (MAJ. IRAHETA) SAID THERE WERE 3,000 REFUGEES IN THE TOWN. HE STATED THERE HAD BEEN FOUR AMBULANCES AND THREE DOCTORS PRESENT THE DAY BEFORE BUT THAT THERE WERE ONLY TWO AMBULANCES AND ONE DOCTOR (HIMSELF) ON DUTY NOW. HE SAID HE HAD TREATED ONLY ONE PERSON FOR WOUNDS DURING HIS TWO DAYS THERE AND

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INTRODUCED THREE EMBOFFS TO A CAMPESINO (PATRICIO MENDOZA RAMIREZ) FROM LA ESPERANZA WITH AN APPARENT MACHETE WOUND IN RIGHT FOREARM. WHEN ASKED WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THE OTHER WOUNDED, HE SAID THEY WERE STILL IN OUTLYING AREAS AND HAD NOT YET COME IN. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE NUMBER OF DEAD, IRAHETA SAID "TWENTY" BUT ADMITTED THE GOES HAD NO CORPSES TO PROVE THIS.

5. EMBOFFS VISITED ONE OF TWO SCHOOLS IN THE TOWN AND THE COMMUNITY CENTER WHERE REFUGEES ARE BEING SHELTERED. LABOR OFFICER ESTIMATED THAT THERE WERE 125 (MOSTLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN) IN THE SCHOOL AND 50 IN THE COMMUNITY CENTER, LEADING HIM TO BELIEVE RIVAS' FIGURE ON REFUGEES (300) IS MORE REALISTIC. ONE OF MALE REFUGEES AT SCHOOL SAID THAT HE AND HIS FAMILY HAD BEEN FORCED TO FLEE FROM CANTON OF EL RODEO ON AFTERNOON OF MARCH 22 AND THAT ALL THE REFUGEES THERE WERE EITHER MEMBERS OR RELATIVES OF MEMBERS OF ORDEN.

6. CAMPESINO LEADER FROM A GROUP NOT INVOLVED IN THE DISTURBANCES TOLD POLITICAL OFFICER MARCH 28 THAT ACCORDING TO HIS INFORMATION, GOES VERSION OF INCIDENT SUBSTANTIALLY CORRECT, BUT PROBABLY WITH FIGURES OF CASUALTIES, OPPOSITION FORCES AND REFUGEES INFLATED. IN HIS OPINION, CONFRONTATION WAS BASICALLY BETWEEN ORDEN AND SUPPORTERS OF GOES ON THE ONE HAND AND BPR GROUPINGS ON THE OTHER FOR CONTROL OF RURAL AREA AND THAT LATTER WAS STEADILY INCREASING ITS FOLLOWING. ALSO MENTIONED SOME INVOLVEMENT BY CATHOLIC CLERGY BUT DID NOT PLACE FULL BLAME ON CHURCH.

RATHER, HE STATED THAT RURAL AREAS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY WERE IN DESPERATE STRAITS AND UNLESS ASSISTANCE FROM GOES AND OTHER SOURCES FORTHCOMING SOON, SIMILAR INCIDENTS COULD BE EXPECTED IN OTHER AREAS. BASIC NEED, HE STATED, WAS MORE RAPID SOCIO-

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR CAMPESINOS.

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 MCT-01 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
COME-00 ACDA-12 HA-05 AID-05 PC-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00  
EB-08 /096 W

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P R 301541Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7484

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAN SALVDOR 1484

7. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC) SOURCE OBTAINED DIFFERENT VERSION FROM PDC MEMBER LIVING NEAR SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN. WOMAN (TEACHER) STATED THAT INCIDENT BEGAN MONDAY, MARCH 20 DURING SOCCER GAME BETWEEN FECCAS AND UNO (POLITICAL OPPOSITION) TEAMS. MEMBERS OF ORDEN, SHE ALLEGES, APPEARED ON SCENE AND "ARRESTED" TRANSITO VASQUEZ. ORDEN MEMBERS ALLEGEDLY TORTURED AND BEHEADED VASQUEZ. ON MARCH 21, GROUP OF FECCAS MEMBERS BROUGHT BODY TO SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN FOR BURIAL AND FORCED TWO MEMBERS OF ORDEN TO DIG GRAVE, KISS MUTILATED BODY, AND THEN KILLED THEM. SHE STATED THAT MILITARY UNITES AND MILITARY HELICOPTERS ARRED IN AREA WITH HELICOPTERS STRAFING VILLAGES (ORDEN AND GOES SUPPORTERS HAD FLED) KILLING 300 PEOPLE. SHE ALSO BLAMED BURNINGS AND OTHER ALLEGED ATROCITIES ON ORDEN AND GOES SECURITY.

8. SECRETARY-GENERAL OF OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTY

MNR TOLD EMBOFFS MARCH 29 THAT HE DID NOT HAVE COMPLETE  
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INFORMATION BUT HAD HEARD UNSUBSTANTIATED ACCOUNTS THAT  
INCIDENT COULD HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT BY BPR TO PUT  
PRESSURE ON WAVERING MEMBERS. ALSO COULD HAVE BEEN SINGLE  
CONFRONTATION BETWEEN BPR AND ORDEN. HE FELT THAT INCIDENT  
BASICALLY INTERNAL AFFAIR WITH NEITHER OUTSIDE BPR NOR GOES  
SECURITY FORCES HAVING BEEN INVOLVED IN STARTING INCIDENT.  
HE STATED THAT IN TALKS WITH CLERGYMEN, CHURCHES IN AREA HAD  
BEEN FULL DURING HOLY WEEK AND CAMPESINOS APPEARED READY TO  
FIGHT AND DIE FOR THEIR RIGHTS. ADDED THAT ALLEGED FRAUD ON  
MARCH 12 IN THIS POLITICALLY ORIENTED AREA COULD HAVE  
COMBINED WITH OTHER FACTORS TO PROVIDE SPARK FOR THIS CONFRONTATION.

9. ARCHBISHOP ROMERO GAVE THIRTY-MINUTE INTERVIEW ON INCIDENT  
OVER TACHOLIC RADIO STATION EARLY AFTERNOON MARCH 29 AND ISSUED  
OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE ON SAME DATE. IN BOTH INTERVIEW AND COMMUNIQUE,  
ARCHBISHOP LAMENTED BLOODY EVENTS OF HOLY WEEK AND STATED THAT  
HE HAD RECEIVED NUMEROUS STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE INCIDENT.  
HE ADDED THAT ORDEN FORCES HAD BEEN ABLE TO HAVE THEIR  
VERSION WIDELY DISSEMINATED AND FELT THAT OPPOSING FORCES SHOULD  
HAVE SAME OPPORTUNITY. ARCHBISHOP STATED THAT VERSION THAT PRESENT-  
LY APPEARS TO BE MOST NEARLY CORRECT IS THE BEHEADING OF TRANSITO  
VASQUEZ BY ORDEN FORCES ON MARCH 20 WHICH STARTED CONFRONTATION.  
HOWEVER, ARCHBISHOP ADDED THAT TESTIMONY STILL BEING RECEIVED  
AND EVALUATED AND DUE TO SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION HE HAD CONVOKED  
A 14-MEMBER COMMISSION COMPOSED OF CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT  
CLERGY, THE UNITED NATIONS' REPRESENTATIVE, DIRECTOR OF  
RED CROSS, AND OTHERES REPRESENTING BROAD SPECTRUM OF SALVADORAN  
SOCIETY TO INVESTIGATE ALL FACTS AND  
ARRIVE AT TRUTH OF TRAGIC INCIDENT.

10. COMMENT. DIFFERING VERSIONS OF SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN INCI-  
DENT COMMON OCCURRENCE IN EL SALVADOR AND PROBABLY ALL VERSIONS  
CONTAIN SOME ELEMENTS OF TRUTH. BIGGEST QUESTION NOW IS WHAT  
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ACTION, IF ANY, BEING CONTEMPLATED BY GOES AND SECURITY FORCES  
TO RESTORE ORDER IN AREA.  
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## Message Attributes

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